



Program Information Document (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 31-Jan-2022 | Report No: PIDC257550

**BASIC INFORMATION****A. Basic Program Data**

Country Nepal	Project ID P177647	Parent Project ID (if any)	Program Name School Sector Transformation Program
Region SOUTH ASIA	Estimated Appraisal Date 02-Sep-2022	Estimated Board Date 15-Dec-2022	Does this operation have an IPF component? Yes
Financing Instrument Program-for-Results Financing	Borrower(s) Nepal	Implementing Agency Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	Practice Area (Lead) Education

Proposed Program Development Objective(s)

The proposed Program Development Objectives (PDOs) are to increase equitable access to and improve the quality of school education in Nepal.

COST & FINANCING**SUMMARY (USD Millions)**

Government program Cost	8,199.00
Total Operation Cost	8,199.00
Total Program Cost	8,193.00
IPF Component	6.00
Total Financing	8,199.00
Financing Gap	0.00

FINANCING (USD Millions)

Total World Bank Group Financing	100.00
World Bank Lending	100.00
Total Government Contribution	8099.00



B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

- 1. Over the period FY2012-19, Nepal's economy performed reasonably well despite being hit by three large exogenous shocks in 2015 (earthquake), 2016 (trade disruptions), and 2017 (floods).** Real GDP growth averaged 5 percent (at market prices) over FY2012-19. Although declining, agriculture continued to play a large role, contributing around 21.6 percent to GDP in FY2019. The service sector also grew in importance, with its share in GDP increasing by 4 percentage points to 52 percent in FY2019. The industry sector grew at the annual average rate of 11.6 percent during FY2017-19, significantly higher than the 2.5 percent growth recorded during FY2012-2016 in response to earthquake-led reconstruction activities, but its share in GDP remained low at 13 percent in FY2019. Similarly, imports continued to outweigh exports during FY2012-19, the former being fueled by remittances and earthquake-led reconstruction activities. Inflation largely remained in the single digits, with the peg of the Nepalese rupee to the Indian rupee providing a nominal anchor. Fiscal balances turned into deficit for the first time since FY2012 in FY2017, as expenditure growth outpaced revenue growth, and remained above 5 percent of GDP in FY2018 and FY2019. Expenditure grew due in part to earthquake-led reconstruction spending and a shift from a centralized government to a three-tier federal structure, which led the annual average expenditure growth rate over the FY2016-19 to nearly double the FY2012-15 average. The proportion of households living in extreme poverty is estimated to have fallen from 15 percent in 2010 to 8 percent in 2019.
- 2. The COVID-19 pandemic derailed the strong growth trajectory established over the past three years.** GDP growth averaged 7.8 percent between FY2017 and FY2019. It contracted by 2.1 percent in FY2020 as a nationwide lockdown from March to July 2020 imposed to curtail the spread of the virus significantly impacted the economy. The economy is estimated to have grown by 1.8 percent in FY2021 even though renewed containment measures were imposed in the fourth quarter of the fiscal year. Agriculture has been a bright spot registering 2.2 and 2.7 percent growth in FY2020 and FY2021, respectively. Industry and the services sectors, which were more severely impacted by the containment measures, are estimated to have grown by only 0.9 and 1.6 percent in FY2021, respectively. Significant labor income shocks from the crisis has been reported in the latter half of 2020.¹ Six months into the first national lockdown beginning March 2020, 25 percent of workers reported permanent job loss and 19 percent reported a prolonged work absence of 4.4 months on average (with a gap of 4 months since the last pay). In addition, 46 percent of employed workers reported earnings losses. With a negligible scale-up of social assistance in response to these shocks in 2020, the risks of increased poverty and longer-term inequality remain high.
- 3. Economic growth is projected to recover gradually to 4.7 percent by FY2023.** The baseline projection assumes (i) no return to nationwide lockdowns despite the rise in new COVID-19 cases, (ii) an effective vaccination rollout to the entire eligible population by mid-April 2022, (iii) a gradual increase in international migration and tourist arrivals as global vaccination rates rise thereby reaching pre-pandemic levels in FY2024, and iv) the gradual resumption of economic activities alongside social distancing and public-health measures. Industrial and service sector activities are expected to reach pre-pandemic levels by FY2022.

¹ The World Bank's 2020 SAR COVID-19 phone monitoring survey reports



4. **Nepal is highly vulnerable to climate-related disasters that have major economic impacts, particularly affecting housing, infrastructure, and agriculture sectors.** Recent studies by the Asian Development Bank suggest Nepal faces losing 2.2 percent of annual GDP due to climate change by 2050. Mean annual temperatures are projected to increase between 1.3-3.8°C by the 2060's, with winters becoming drier and monsoon summers wetter. Some estimates predict a threefold increase in monsoon rainfall, likely resulting in more frequent winter droughts and summer floods, landslides, and transmission of waterborne and vector-borne diseases.

Sectoral and Institutional Context of the Program

5. **One year of pre-primary and basic education (grades 1-8) is free and compulsory, and secondary education (grades 9-12) is free in Nepal** guaranteed under the 2015 Constitution and the 2018 Compulsory and Free Education Act. Nepal's education sector is guided by the 2019 National Education Policy, which calls for equitable access for all to quality education. Under the new federal structure, responsibility for basic and secondary education has shifted to the local level, with the federal and provincial governments mainly responsible for higher education. However, the federal ministry continues to play a prominent role in guiding education policy and setting standards. Broadly, there are three types of schools in Nepal – community (public/government) schools; institutional (private) schools, and traditional/religious schools. In 2020, 77 percent of all schools were community schools, 21 percent were institutional and 2 percent were religious schools with 75 percent of students enrolled in community schools and about 24 percent in institutional schools².

6. **In the last decade, Nepal has made impressive gains in education access and gender parity, across all levels.** Between 2010 and 2020, gross enrolment rate at the ECD/PPE level increased from 66.2 percent to 87.6 percent, net enrollment rate (NER) at the basic level increased from 83.2 to 94.7 percent, and NER at the secondary level increased from 24 to 50.9 percent. Nepal has also made commendable progress along the gender dimension and has achieved gender parity in basic and secondary education.

7. **While access has improved, learning levels remain low and are projected to decline further as a result of COVID-19 and climate-induced disasters related school closures.** National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA) carried out by Education Review Office (ERO) measures students' performance against the learning outcomes specified in the curriculum. NASA initiated in 2011 is currently conducted in grades 5, 8, and 10³. Learning outcomes as measured by NASA are low across all levels and showed a declining trend in certain subjects even before the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2018, only 28 percent of Grade 5 students demonstrated grade-appropriate skills and knowledge in Mathematics, and only 45 percent performed at the proficient or advanced level in Nepali⁴. Mean achievement in Mathematics was lower as compared to the last assessment round in 2015⁵. Learning is expected to fall further as a result of COVID-19 shutdowns. Recent study shows that nearly 35 percent of Grade 5 students could not do two-digit addition with carryover.⁶

8. **Education inputs and learning outcomes are unequal and vary by geographic area, gender, and ethnic group.** Overall, Bagmati⁷, Lumbini and Gandaki provinces fare better than provinces 1,2, Karnali, and Sudurpaschim. Students from institutional schools consistently outperformed students from community schools in all subjects across all

² School Level Educational Statistics of Nepal – Consolidated Report 2019/2020 (FLASH)

³ NASA is conducted every three years for Grade 5,8 and 10 - NASA has been conducted at grade 5 in 2012, 2015 and 2018; at grade 8 level in 2011, 2013 and 2017 and at grade 10 level in 2019.

⁴ NASA 2018 Grade 5 report

⁵ Government of Nepal (GoN) changed the methodology to calculate mean achievement in 2017. Therefore, the numbers per se are not comparable over years. However, the government reported the trend in achievement which is mentioned here.

⁶ Radhakrishnan, Karthika; Angrist, Noam; Bergman, Peter; Cullen, Claire; Matsheng, Moitshepi; Ramakrishnan, Anusha; Sabarwal, Shwetlena; Sharma, Uttam. 2021. Learning in the Time of COVID-19 : Insights from Nepal. World Bank, Washington, DC

⁷ Kathmandu, the nation's capital is located in Bagmati province



assessments⁸. Boys outperform girls in all subjects except Nepali⁹. Further, students belonging to advantaged households by caste/ethnicity perform better than students belonging to disadvantaged households. Education inputs, such as classrooms, learning materials, WASH facilities, and teachers are also unequally distributed, with some local areas lacking the minimum enabling conditions required for learning.

9. **Limited teacher capacity along with inadequate needs-based continuous professional development for teachers is one of the key reasons for low learning levels.** In Nepal, those who have completed Grade 12 or obtained a proficiency certificate in any subject and completed a 10-month teacher training course are eligible for basic education teaching posts. In-service teacher training is extremely important as it helps undertrained teachers strengthen their knowledge and pedagogical skills. Under SSDP, teacher training was a key focus area. Various modalities of training including short-term courses, virtual training, self-learning, formation of networks as well as school-based continuous professional development were planned. Overall, about 73 percent of teachers at the basic and secondary level in community schools have undergone some form of teacher training in Nepal¹⁰. However, despite these efforts, teachers still employ rote methods and teacher-centric teaching in the classroom, and skills learned in training programs are not applied at the ground level. Further, in-service training delivery focused on off-site short-term programs rather than school-based support. Coordination with universities for improved pre-service teacher training is also weak. There has also been limited focus on developing ICT skills among teachers. Another challenge is the low capacity of teacher training centers. 29 former Education Training Centres (ETCs) have been reduced to 7 Provincial Education Training Centres (PETCs), as part of the shift to a federal system of governance, implying a shift in role from direct delivery of training towards providing technical assistance to LGs. The capacity of these PETCs needs strengthening.

10. **COVID-19 has also brought to light the vulnerabilities of the education system, especially for providing remote learning and support.** Nepal announced school shutdowns in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Since then, schools have opened intermittently, and currently, the schools have closed again due to the third wave. The GoN has implemented several alternative learning programs including radio and TV-based programs, online learning portal, SMS and phone-based teaching support as well as small group community-based teaching to provide learning continuity during school closure. However, access to these programs remains a challenge. Two-thirds of school children were unable to access remote learning during school closures¹¹. Fewer than half of households have access to TV and only about one-third own radios. Computer and internet access is low and uneven across provinces, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. While mobile penetration is high, with 80 percent of households reporting access, the usage of phones to access learning platforms consistently remains low. In addition, frequent closure of schools in parts of the country due to climate-induced disasters is also prominent. Building system resilience, including digitized learning programs and ensuring equity in access during emergencies is therefore of critical importance and a key priority area for the GoN.

11. **Shift to the federal system of governance has necessitated increased investments in capacity development at the local level.** Under the federal structure, local levels have been assigned the primary responsibility for managing school education. The Local Government Operations Act 2017, which provides details on the functions of the LGs, places 23 functions related to planning, monitoring, and management of basic and secondary education under the jurisdiction of LGs. However, formal mechanisms for communication and coordination among various government entities under the new arrangements are yet to be established. The capacity of LGs to carry out their education management mandate also varies greatly and there is a general lack of capacity in evidence-based planning, budgeting, finance management, and prioritization.

⁸ Students from institutional schools scored 51 points more than students from community schools in Math, 49 points more in science, 21 points more in Nepali and 68 points more in English in the 2019 Grade 10 NASA.

⁹ Boys scored 18 points more in Maths, 16 points more in Science, and 10 points more in English in Grade 10 NASA though there is no gap in Nepali.

¹⁰ School Level Educational Statistics of Nepal – Consolidated Report 2019/2020 (FLASH)

¹¹ Remote Learning Reachability Report, UNICEF 2020



12. **The proposed program aims to address these challenges through a results-based Program-for Results (PforR) operation by supporting the first phase of the GoN’s School Education Sector Plan (SESP; 2021-2030).** SESP has the following objectives: (i) to ensure equitable access to and participation of all children, especially those who are socially and economically disadvantaged, children from marginalized groups, and children with disabilities; (ii) to enhance the quality and relevance of overall school education and ensure minimum learning achievement in each child; (iii) to make all citizens literate with basic functional skills and expand opportunities for continuing education and lifelong learning; (iv) to ensure the effectiveness of education service delivery by promoting good governance across the system, strengthening intergovernmental coordination and collaboration and developing institutional capacities of all institutions and individuals involved in the delivery of school education. The proposed PforR operation, the School Sector Transformation Program (SSTP), will support the first five years of the SESP. It will finance outcomes/results associated with improvements in quality of basic and secondary education through enhanced service delivery, improved local governance and strengthened capacity on implementation, financial management, and monitoring and evaluation.

13. **The PforR operation will play a key role in advancing the Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development (GRID) agenda in Nepal.** SESP supports the GRID agenda to safeguard children’s right to education during climate-induced disasters, natural disasters and pandemics and to ensure that the poor and vulnerable particularly benefit from Program interventions. The Program will address climate/ disaster related issues through (i) adaptation measures, such as construction or retrofitting of classrooms in preparedness for future disasters, increasing climate awareness among students and teachers by incorporating these issues in the national curriculum, facilitating learning mechanisms that minimize teaching interruptions during disasters; and (ii) mitigation interventions, such as adopting green design features when refurbishing physical infrastructure. SESP will support low-performing LGs in improving equity along gender, disability, socioeconomic status, language, caste, and ethnicity dimensions in access, participation, and learning.

Relationship to CAS/CPF

14. The proposed PforR is well aligned with the World Bank Group’s Nepal Country Partnership Framework (CPF) 2019–2023. Improving equity in access to quality education is one of the objectives (Objective 3.1) of the ‘Inclusion and Resilience’ focus area (Focus Area 3) of the CPF. The framework highlights the need to improve the quality of education across all levels with a specific focus on reducing the disparities in outcomes across Nepal’s regions and socioeconomic groups. The proposed program is also aligned with Objective 1.2 - strengthened institutions for public sector management and service delivery - under the ‘Public Institutions’ focus area (Focus Area 1), which supports strengthening systems and capacities of public education institutions for continued service delivery. This program would contribute to the above themes through improved quality, equity, governance, and management of the education services.

Rationale for Bank Engagement and Choice of Financing Instrument

15. **The World Bank has developed a strong partnership with the GoN in the education sector over the years and has provided strategic leadership to the GoN in its efforts to increase access, improve quality and promote good governance in the sector.** The World Bank has supported GoN’s school sector programs such as Education for All (EFA;2004-09), School Sector Reform Program (SSRP; 2009-2016), and School Sector Development Program (SSDP; 2017-2021) through a sector-wide approach (SWAp). Further, the Bank has worked extensively in many other countries and supported their efforts to improve school education and has delivered lasting impacts. Lessons learned from its experience in Nepal and globally would provide valuable insights which would help design sustainable and impactful interventions. The Bank is well-placed to provide financial support to the education sector, as well as leverage its experience in the country and internationally to inform operational and analytical work in Nepal.



16. **PforR is the appropriate financing instrument.** The justification for the use of PforR is as follows: (i) with the GoN's school sector program in place, the Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) provide a stronger focus on accountability for results and outcomes and incentivize government's ownership and implementation of critical reforms and policies in the school education sector; (ii) the PforR operation further strengthens the use of country systems for program implementation, fiduciary, safeguards and monitoring arrangements in the federal context; (iii) the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MOEST) – executing agency for the proposed program - is already experienced with DLI-based operations funded by the World Bank and other Development Partners (DPs) and the Ministry of Finance (MOF) has a strong preference for a PforR operation; and (iv) PforR provides several advantages over IPF instrument in terms of flexibility and efficiency in supporting a fairly large national program.

C. Program Development Objective(s) (PDO) and PDO Level Results Indicators

Program Development Objective(s)

The proposed Program Development Objectives (PDOs) are to increase equitable access to and improve the quality of school education in Nepal.

PDO Level Results Indicators

17. **The achievement of the PDO will depend on results under four PDO indicators:** (i) improved NER in Grades 9-12 (disaggregated by gender); (ii) increased share of Grade 5 students achieving grade-level proficiency in language ((disaggregated by gender); (iii) improved teaching practices by classroom teachers in Grades 1-5 in selected LGs as measured through classroom observation; (iv) improved share of LGs that achieve key performance indicators.

D. Program Description

PforR Program Boundary

18. SSTP covers all levels of school education from ECED/pre-primary education, basic education (grades 1-8), secondary education (grades 9-12), and non-formal education. The program will annually benefit over 7 million students and over 250,000 teachers and ECED facilitators in over 35,000 community schools and centers across the country. The scope of the proposed Bank Operation would be to support the national SESP program given that the Bank is part of the SWAp whereby the Government and several other DPs jointly finance the entire program. The World Bank Operation is clustered around three results areas under the PforR component and a separate TA component using the Investment Project Financing (IPF) instrument for Program management, monitoring, and evaluation support. The three result areas are (i) Improved teacher capacity and student learning outcomes; (ii) Improved equity in basic and secondary education; and (iii) Strengthened education governance and system resilience. A subset of the SESP interventions, outputs, and outcomes would be chosen as the Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs).

Result Area 1: Improved teacher capacity and student learning outcomes (US\$30 million)

19. **Improving Early Grade Learning:** Under the SSDP, a national early grade reading program (NEGRP) and integrated curriculum is being piloted. As part of the program, a NEGRP minimum package has been developed and includes (a) teaching materials, (b) teacher training and classroom support, (c) community mobilization, (d) student assessment, and (e) monitoring and evaluation. LGs in twenty districts have rolled out the program so far. The integrated curriculum has been rolled out nationally and it involves interconnecting subjects while teaching based on a common theme. This sub-results area will focus on strengthening the foundational skills in reading and numeracy through the implementation of the integrated curriculum for Grades 1-3, teacher training, development of teaching and learning materials and student assessments.



20. **Curriculum, Assessments, and Examination:** This sub-results area will build on the momentum gained under SSDP and continue to support the revision and implementation of curriculum for grades 9-12. Specific focus will be placed on integrating climate-related topics to raise awareness to reduce adverse environmental footprints, promote eco-literacy and enhance climate literacy. Under this sub-results area, the capacity of the ERO to conduct standardized assessments at Grades 5, 8, and 10 independently; analyze assessment data, and report actionable findings will be further developed. Under SSDP, policy guidelines for the implementation of NASA for Grades 5 and 8 involving the production of proficiency descriptors and proficiency levels aligned with the SDG 4.1 indicators and guided by the Global Proficiency Framework are being developed. This sub-results area will further support ERO to strengthen NASA and help implement the guidelines to ensure reporting on SDG 4.1 indicators. Further, support will be provided to the National Examination Board, responsible for conducting annual board examinations at the end of Grade 10 to conduct these standardized examinations at the provincial level.

21. **Teachers:** Under this sub-results area, support will be provided for the design and implementation of in-service training for basic and secondary teachers which teaches practical skills required in the classroom. Teachers will be provided practice opportunities and will be observed and mentored by expert coaches. Teachers will be also trained on understanding and using associated formative assessment data and implementing targeted approaches to address the differentiated needs of children in the classrooms. Teachers will also be trained on using ICT, specifically developing and delivering lessons using alternative means, and integrating alternative learning into mainstream education. Teachers will be also trained on integrated curriculum and the green school initiative which includes climate change preparedness/emergency response of teachers and evacuation protocols. Support will be also provided to expand the number of PETCs and strengthen their capacity to meet teacher training needs. In addition, this results area will also support the provision of grants to LGs for additional teachers at the secondary level to meet the established student-teacher ratio.

Result Area 2: Improved equity in access to basic and secondary education (US\$ 50 million)

22. **Pro-poor targeted scholarships:** One of the key outputs under SESP is to establish a scholarship system to support financially poor children across grade levels to enroll, retain and meaningfully participate in learning. Under SSDP, a pro-poor targeted scholarship scheme was designed and implemented in grades 9-12, and a pro-science scholarship scheme was implemented in grades 11-12 in all districts. This sub-results area will add to that activity and strengthen and improve the efficiency of existing scholarship schemes at the basic level (Pre-primary- Grade 8). Existing basic education scholarship schemes would be revised and integrated to make them needs-based. Targeting mechanisms/ guidelines to select eligible students would be designed. A lump-sum grant amount will be provided to the LGs to select students in line with the guidelines, including climate vulnerability.

23. **Green and Resilient Infrastructure:** Construction of green and resilient classrooms will be supported under SSTP to reduce the risks from climate change and natural disasters, including earthquakes. Post-2015 earthquakes, the World Bank supported the GoN to conduct two baseline censuses in the earthquake-affected districts: (i) Structural Integrity and Damage Assessment (SIDA) of all educational institutions and (ii) household census to assess the damage. Based on earlier experience, Structural Integrity Assessment (SIA) has recently been expanded to cover all the public buildings nationwide, including community schools. The construction of classrooms under SSTP will be informed by SIA. In addition, SSTP will support the “green school” program to promote green, clean and safe schools. Classrooms will be child-friendly, disabled-friendly, and will incorporate green designs, such as the installation of solar panels and rainwater harvesting systems, and improved insulation that allows for energy efficiency as well as use by communities as evacuation centers during climate-related disasters.



24. **Equity Strategy:** Under SSDP, a consolidated equity strategy was developed and associated policy reforms were introduced. The primary objective of the equity strategy is to reduce disparities in (i) access and participation and (ii) learning outcomes at the basic and secondary education levels. Under this sub-results area, the equity strategy will be reviewed and revised, and support will be provided to include relevant equity indicators in the EMIS. This sub-results area will support low-performing LGs and help them in improving equity along gender, disability, socioeconomic status, language, caste, and ethnicity dimensions in access, participation, and learning.

Result Area 3: Strengthened education governance and system resilience (US\$14 million)

25. **Governance:** Under the federal structure, most of the school education budget is allocated to LGs by the federal government in the form of conditional grants. Under this results area, the criteria for conditional grants would be reviewed and revised. Part of the grants would be based on need while another part would be based on the performance of the LG, as a means to incentivize achievement. Further, the capacity of local and provincial governments would be developed to carry out evidence-based planning, budgeting, finance management, prioritization, and reporting. This will increase efficiency and improve the implementation of conditional grants.

26. **Resilient and Inclusive Technology:** Technology has become a critical part of education delivery as a result of COVID-19. This sub-results area will support the establishment of the ICT data center and the development of digital teaching and learning materials. The ICT data center will help improve remote learning delivery and will enhance data recovery and backup systems to prevent data/ information loss in the event of natural disasters. Multi-modal learning platforms created as part of the COVID-19 response would be strengthened and made inclusive and integrated into mainstream education, including streamlining of the education portal. A learning recovery plan will be developed and implemented in the first years of SESP to address learning loss due to COVID-19 school closures. In addition, this sub-results area will support the strengthening of EMIS and the scale-up of School Accounting Software (SAS) to ensure quality and reliability. The Program will support implementation of EMIS policy guidelines and strategic plans which includes improved access to student information with GIS mapping including information on climate risks (such as disaster hotspots) to improve targeting of interventions for students during times of crisis.

TA component (IPF): Program management, monitoring, and evaluation (US \$ 6 million)

27. Technical Assistance would include provision and utilization of services, skills, knowledge, and technology in the form of short-term and long-term advisors and consultants, consulting firms, and non-consulting agencies to support and strengthen the capacity of SSTP program implementation. This component will support (i) the capacity development of LGs in specific areas, including teacher professional development and ICT; (ii) MOEST/Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) in strengthening quality and timeliness of reporting from LGs, fiduciary and safeguard management, undertaking assessments and evaluation studies, and commissioning the independent verification agency; and (iii) strengthen coordination among various government entities.

E. Initial Environmental and Social Screening

28. The Environmental and Social Systems Assessment (ESSA) will be prepared for the Program to identify and assess current systemic gaps with regard to institutional mechanisms and arrangements, in terms of their capacity to plan and implement effective measures for E&S impact management at federal, provincial, local and school levels; budget allocation, coordination, and monitoring; and capacity building. The ESSA will give due consideration to promoting environmental and social sustainability in Program design and avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating the Program's adverse impacts and promoting equitable access to Program beneficiaries, and addressing the needs and concerns of vulnerable groups. For the IPF Component, activities will be screened and environment and social risk assessment and management will be integrated into the Terms of Reference consistent with the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework.



Legal Operational Policies	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No

Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts of the IPF Component

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